

Would Protect Workers Who Report Dangerous Violations of Drilling Laws  
July 13, 2010

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, Congressman Charlie Melancon (LA-03) unveiled legislation he has introduced to protect offshore workers from retaliation for blowing the whistle on dangerous violations of offshore drilling laws. The legislation (H.R. 5698) is intended to encourage more employees to notify government officials of risky practices by their companies before they lead to serious accidents.

**“If a corporation puts profits above the lives of its workers, above the health of the environment, and above the safety of Louisiana’s wetlands and the fragile ecosystems that our seafood industry relies on, it must be held accountable,”** said Congressman Melancon. **“My bill will protect workers who have the courage to stand up and fight companies that take dangerous and illegal shortcuts to save money. These new whistleblower protections for offshore workers will help prevent another tragedy like Deepwater from happening again.”**

The two major laws that govern offshore drilling -- the Oil Pollution Act of 1990 and the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act -- do not contain any whistleblower protection provisions. The Melancon legislation would amend these two acts to protect workers from retaliation from their employers for notifying government officials of violations of offshore drilling laws, and protect their right to refuse to perform work that violates those laws. The bill would also prohibit an employer from discriminating against an employee for notifying federal or state regulatory agencies of violations of offshore drilling laws.

During a committee hearing in May, the chief mechanic on the Deepwater Horizon rig testified to Congress that he repeatedly warned his supervisors that they had fallen behind on preventive maintenance and compliance requirements, to no avail. Chief Mechanic/Acting Second Engineer Douglas Harold Brown said Transocean had eliminated half of the engineer positions in the engine room during his tenure, and his supervisors repeatedly ignored his requests for additional help ( [click here to read testimony](#) ). Congressman Melancon’s bill would protect workers like Chief Mechanic Brown from being fired for reporting these violations.

Congressman Melancon represents in Congress the areas of coastal Louisiana most directly affected by the oil leak, including Plaquemines, St. Bernard, Terrebonne, Lafourche, St. Mary and southern Jefferson Parishes. The Deepwater Horizon platform was located 50 miles off the coast of Louisiana’s Third Congressional District.

[Click here to read Congressman Melancon’s legislation](#) .

###